



A Safe Walking Route from Swindon to Royal Wootton Bassett

For many years, it has not been possible to walk safely between the centre of Swindon and the town of Royal Wootton Bassett without taking a very wide detour, but now there's a way to avoid the worst of the traffic. This one-way walk assumes that the return journey is made by the No. 99 or No. 55 bus.

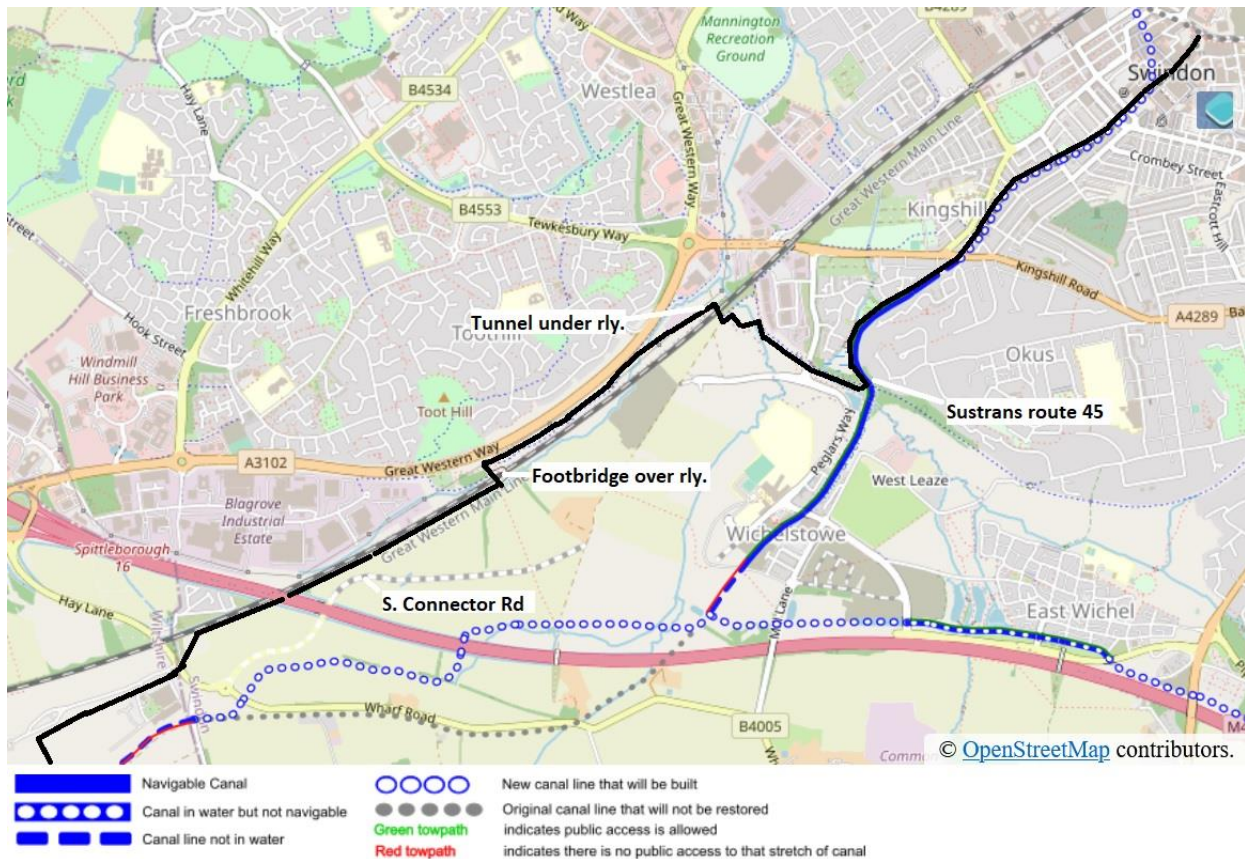
Starting at the Golden Lion statue, follow Canal Walk south past Wharf Green and the multi-storey car park towards the 'Southern Flyer' cycleway / footpath which is partly along the canal line. Continue along the canal until you reach the 'Skew Bridge'. Turn right to join the Sustrans cycleway 45 westwards along the old railway until it slopes down towards West Swindon.

Unfortunately, construction work is blocking the usual way south along the country lane called Elcombe Road. Instead, turn right through the small road tunnel under the railway, then left along the path. There is a well-worn track that leads to a large footbridge over the railway, taking you towards Wichelstowe – but be aware that some of those paths are currently blocked.



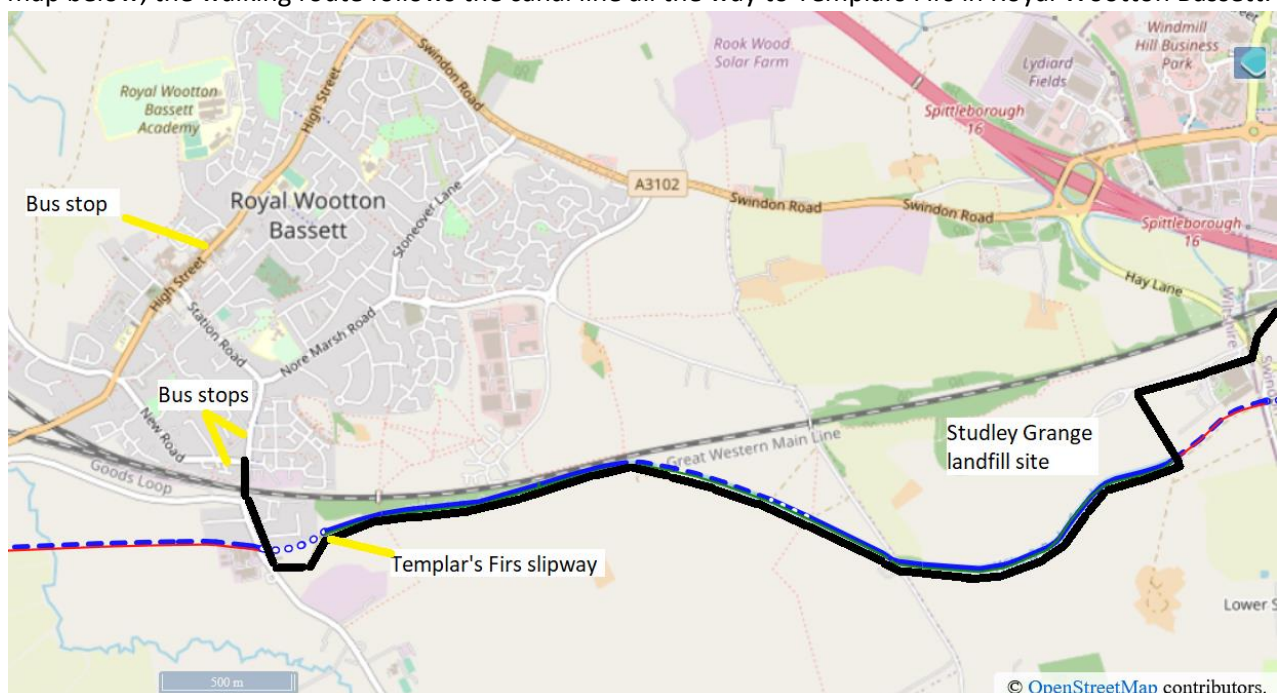
After the footbridge, turn right to keep close to the railway until it goes under the M4 bridge. Continue close to the railway until the path veers half left towards the original alignment of Hay Lane, which is now a cul-de-sac.

Cross over the road towards the Garden Centre and continue along the roadway until you see the beginning of a footpath. This will lead you to a new permissive path provided by Biffa which takes you towards the restored canal at Studley Grange. The map shown here is based on the WBCT Interactive Map, with the walking route in black:



Note that the Open Street Map version shows the Wichelstowe Southern Connector Road, which has a 3-metre-wide footpath and cycleway. Unfortunately, the new road remains closed, but when it is opened, you will be able to follow the restored canal to Wichelstowe, which will be shorter than the railway footpath.

In a few years, the restored canal will extend south of Wichelstowe towards the motorway, through a separate tunnel and under Wharf Road before joining the existing canal at Studley Grange. In the meantime, at least we have a safe route beside the railway to Hay Lane and then around the Garden Centre. On the map below, the walking route follows the canal line all the way to Templars Firs in Royal Wootton Bassett.





At the end of the Biffa footpath, there is a new sign with a canal map where the path crosses the end of the waterway by a bund. Follow the steps down to the towpath.

There are several benches along the way, plus information boards illustrating the local wildlife. If you've brought paper and crayons for children to make sketches, there's even a set of 'brass rubbings' of animals and birds to trace. The canal curves around the Studley Grange landfill site, now being restored to farmland.



Crossing over Bincknoll Lane, the towpath then passes Chaddington Spill-Weir where there is another canal map.

You are now in Morningside Farm, with the nationally important wild-flower-rich meadows to the south of the canal.

Continuing along the towpath, you soon reach Chaddington Lock and a shorter stretch of canal to the western end of Morningside Farm.

The next half-kilometre is a public footpath through Harris Croft Farm. Please keep to the public

footpath and don't trespass on to the farmland and its access track. For much of the Harris Croft section, the old canal is in water during the winter, but for about a third of the length, the old canal has been filled in.

At the west end of the infilled canal before you reach the self-sown Willow trees, is the site of Woodshaw Lock, now completely buried.

Beyond Harris Croft Farm, there is a stretch of restored canal with a good towpath – and if you wish, you can cross to the north bank of the canal and follow a permissive path all the way to the Templar’s Firs slipway.

You won’t see many fir trees, but the woodland separating the railway from the canal is a good mixture of Oaks, Willows and other deciduous trees.



Francis Templar farmed the land for much of the 19th Century, and the GWR linked the canal to the farmhouse on Brynard’s Hill with a bridge named the “Templar’s Farm Overbridge”.

There are two footbridges across the canal. The first is called Buxstone Bridge after the landowner when the canal was built. The second is called Noremarsh Bridge. Beyond is the Templar’s Firs slipway, seen below.

At the slipway, take the farm track around the old Council Depot and through a car park to Marlborough Road.

Turn right past the Royal Mail building and a line of houses named ‘Bridgelands’ (built on the site of the old Bridge Inn – the canal bridge has



long since been flattened) and then over the railway bridge at the site of the former railway station. North of the railway beyond the New Road roundabout is Station Road.

For much of the day apart from Sundays, there’s a Coachstyle bus service 99 from Royal Wootton Bassett to Swindon that stops at New Road and Station Road hourly between 9:28 and 16:28, then 17:36 and 18:41. The Stagecoach 55 route from Chippenham and Calne to Swindon goes via the High Street three times an hour on weekdays and Saturdays with a half-hourly service in evenings and on Sundays.

There are plenty of cafés, pubs and restaurants in Royal Wootton Bassett’s town centre. The museum on the half-timbered Old Town Hall is open on Wednesday and Saturday mornings between 10 and 12.

Steve Bacon, Chair, Royal Wootton Bassett branch (Web-site: wbct.org.uk).

Restoring all 70 miles of the Wilts & Berks canal to create a public waterside park for walking, cycling, fishing and boating.
The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. Registered Charity No 299595, Limited Company No 2267719
Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham SN15 4HD

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